

Ten Tips to Breaking Down Brick Walls

[Video Link](#)

Ten Tips - Let's Go!

1) Start with the Ancestors in Which You Have Confidence.

This is Your "Starting Ancestor."

a) Create a **Research Question** about the "Next Step" you want to take.

b) What or Who You Want to Learn More About? This is your "**Target Ancestor**" (the one you are searching for).



2) Gather all Evidence (Documents and DNA if applicable) for...

a) The **Starting Ancestor** (the one you have confidence)

b) The **Immediate Family** (Siblings, etc.)

c) The **Target Ancestor** you want to know more about. (Siblings Etc.)

3) Organize the Evidence in Chronological Order.

4) Transcribe All Documents

5) Evaluate the Documents and Evidence

a) When was it created?

b) Note every detail.

c) Is it a copy or an original?

6) Abstract the Documents



- a) Pull non-boiler plate details out.
- b) Keep abstracted details the in same order as the original transcription.

7) Create Research Notes

- a) One Research Notes Document per person. You may need to open several at one time, as you research.
- b) Add abstracted details into your research notes OFFLINE.
- c) In Chronological order.
- d) Note: Some documents may have multiple events, like birth date on a death certificate. Add an entry for each event in the research notes.
- e) CITE YOUR SOURCES.

8) What's Missing?

- a) Add to your research notes highlighted in red.
- b) This creates one document that is your research notes and research plan all in one place.

9) Research Missing Documents

- a) Look everywhere! Ancestry, FamilySearch... online and offline.
- b) State Archives, Federal Archives, WorldCat, ArchiveGrid, local libraries and county courthouses. Think about where those documents might be. If you don't know, look on the [FamilySearch Wiki](#).

10) Conclude Your Findings. After gathering, documenting, and evaluating the facts from all evidence, you can weigh it and come to conclusions about your findings.

BONUS TIP

Write your conclusions into your research notes. Outline what you found, your correlation of facts, and why. **SAVE EARLY – SAVE OFTEN**

If you have pulled everything there is to find, you likely have more information than anyone else online. The odds are high that *if this family history mystery of*

yours is going to be solved, you are the one to do it... because you followed these steps.

If after this process of reasonably exhaustive research you have not solved it, it might be that it can't be solved, or the paper trail has run dry. Don't give up!

With new documents coming online everyday and technology evolving, you never know what you might find later. It might be you just need to give it a rest for a week or two and come back to it later with fresh eyes.

Additional Videos and Resources:

- [Creating Great Research Notes](#)
- [Correlating Evidence](#)
- [Transcribing and Abstracting Documents](#)

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